

SUMMARY

DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROGRAM PHASE I STUDY

INTRODUCTION

In early October, 1979, after two months of intensive analysis, the consulting firm of Sedway/Cooke submitted to the San Francisco Department of City Planning its report, Downtown San Francisco Conservation and Development Planning Program - Phase I: Reconnaissance and Programming. The report identifies and assesses the major physical, economic and social issues, and planning opportunities and constraints associated with continued Downtown growth. It proposes a scope of work required for the remaining phases of the Downtown program, and suggests temporary controls to guide development while the Downtown Plan and final legislative amendments to the City Planning Code and Zoning Ordinance are pursued.

BACKGROUND

Public interest has focused recently on specific issues related to Downtown's future development. Transportation, housing, circulation, fiscal impact, environmental quality and regional role all have been subject to public debate. Development in Downtown currently is controlled by the City Planning

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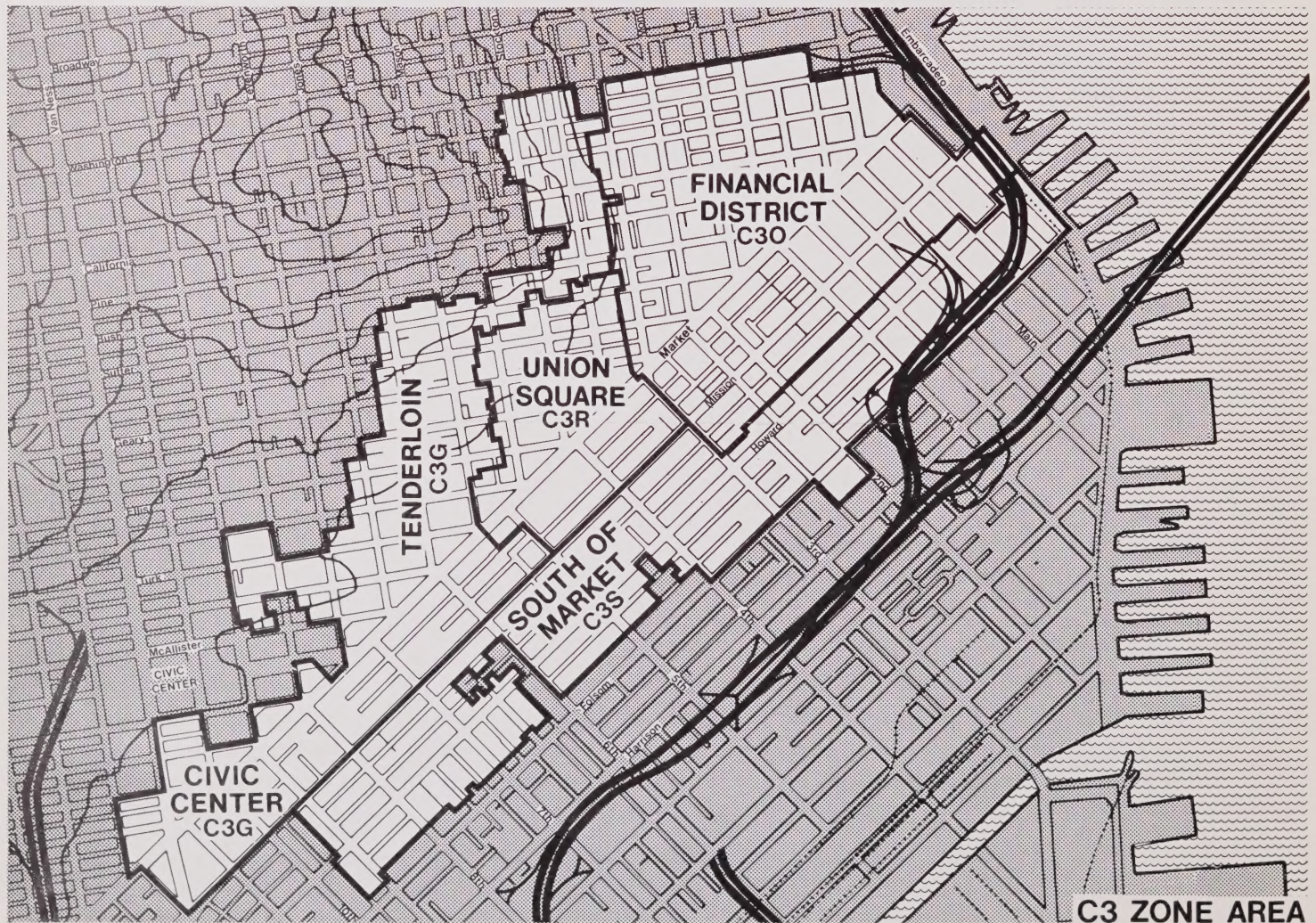
Code, encompassing the area in the C-3 zone. This zone defines allowable Downtown commercial activities, including office, retail, wholesale, financial, government, housing, hotel, entertainment, and light industrial uses. The need to prepare a plan arose from the acknowledged shortcomings of these regulations. The Master Plan and the Urban Design Plan are statements of broader city-wide policy, and are not binding.

Within this context, Phase I of the San Francisco Downtown Conservation and Development Planning Program was funded by the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors. The study covered the Financial District, Union Square, the Tenderloin, Civic Center and South of Market areas. The study team included the staff of the Department of City Planning; Sedway/Cooke, urban planning and design consultants; a community liaison panel and a technical advisory panel.

The final plan, to take approximately fifteen months to complete, will be a statement of official public policy arrived at after full public discussion, private and public sector involvement and professional analysis. It will indicate when, how, and where office, commercial and retail uses, and housing and public services should occur, and will include comprehensive development regulations. In addition, a Master Environmental Assessment for Downtown will be included against which future developments can be evaluated.

STUDY APPROACH

The Phase I study projected the physical, economic and social forces that are shaping Downtown to see what it would be like in the future were current controls or a variant of them to apply. A set of



key issues were identified: the role of Downtown in relation to the rest of the city and the Bay Area; the type and intensity of activities to be carried in Downtown; the tolerable limits of environmental and social impacts of Downtown activities; the appropriate physical form and appearance of Downtown and its buildings; accessibility to, and movement within Downtown; the extent of Downtown housing opportunities; the conservation of natural resources, especially energy; the public facilities and services essential to support Downtown expansion; and the retention of the City's historical and architectural heritage.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Between the years 1979 and 2000, a "market demand" is projected for about 50 million square feet of additional building space in Downtown. Phase I analysis indicates that this level of future growth could be accommodated in Downtown under current regulations. Other significant findings and impacts of current controls associated with this level of growth are the following:

- o Commuter movement would increase enormously, by 25 percent short-term (1985) and 60 percent long-term (2000), requiring substantial transit improvements. Beyond 1985, no increase in commuter peak-period auto traffic could be accommodated at all.
- o New Downtown employees would generate substantial housing demand--17,200 new units for Downtown employees by 1985. Hence, it is likely that new Downtown growth would displace many current low and moderate income residents. Projections show that hundreds of apartments and thousands of hotel rooms would be demolished to make way for new buildings; replacement of either would be highly unlikely.
- o Historic and architecturally significant structures would continue to be imperiled; about 15 percent of all such buildings would be demolished under current regulations.
- o Views of the Downtown skyline would change dramatically, with the distinction between Downtown and Nob, Telegraph and Potrero Hills blurred. The streetscape would become less inviting with Market Street plazas and major retail streets darkened and made windier by taller buildings.
- o As land available for Downtown development decreases in supply and the demand for building space increases, rents would increase, thereby dislocating industrial and commercial service firms which provide economic diversity for Downtown but cannot afford to compete at the higher rents.
- o Incremental costs for new Downtown development could exceed incremental revenues by as much as 25 percent. This is attributable to the increasing post-Proposition 13 shift of the tax burden from Downtown to residential owners.
- o Carbon monoxide emissions in the Downtown area would increase by about 50 percent by the year 2000, because of increased traffic and slower driving speeds.

NEXT STEPS

The Downtown Plan and supporting implementation programs are intended to mitigate the adverse impacts associated with expected growth, and to provide San Francisco with permanent mechanisms to reconcile the competing interests for limited Downtown space, resources and assets. However, while the Plan is being prepared, temporary "interim" controls are proposed.

Interim controls, recommended to the Department of City Planning, are meant only to preserve options for the City while planning occurs. They are to be refined by the Department and acted upon by the Planning Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors. They are not yet based on a comprehensive plan and are not a model for ultimate regulation.

The following figure illustrates the planning program for the Downtown Plan which the consultants have recommended. Phase I is complete; the balance of the planning program is yet to be undertaken.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING PROGRAM

PHASE I - RECONNAISSANCE AND PROGRAMMING

Identify critical growth constraints associated with Downtown development. Identify growth impacts and implications in the following: Land Use, Environment, Transportation, Housing, Fiscal, Historical Resources, Urban Design, Energy, Public Facilities and Services, Industrial and Commercial Dislocation. Promote citizen involvement and public understanding of Downtown critical issues.

Prepare Phase I report detailing critical impacts, planning process and program for Phases 2 and 3 of the Downtown Plan, and recommendations for temporary controls.

PHASE 2 - PREPARATION OF DOWNTOWN PLAN

Preparation of Final Downtown Plan, supporting implementation program and environmental impact report. Public involvement in setting goals and objectives for future Downtown development and conservation. Identification of land use, transportation and physical form options for the Plan. Assessment of economic and implementation feasibility, environmental consequences, transportation needs, and social impacts. Formulation of composite plan options for further assessment and public review. Selection and refinement of preferred plan which takes best advantage of positive aspects of prior analysis. Preparation of the Final Plan containing necessary elements; implementation program; and a Downtown Plan Environmental Impact Report. Growth management implementation program, with procedures for regulating the rate of growth, establishing the regulatory provisions for building design, specifying the procedures for the review of development proposals, designating capital improvement requirements and priorities, providing housing programs, establishing special districts, and providing necessary public finance.

PHASE 3

Approval of Plan by City Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. Certification of Environmental Impact Report by Commission. Modification and adoption of Final Plan and implementation program, based on EIR and public review. Adopt San Francisco Downtown Conservation and Development Plan and Implementation Program.

Copies of the full Phase I report are available for public review at the Department of City Planning, 100 Larkin Street, San Francisco and at the Main Library, Civic Center.

This Summary was prepared for the San Francisco Department of City Planning by Sedway/Cooke.

November 1979

